

“His Squareness” Filip Turek and his Engine Boys: A Case Study of Cringe Political Communication Centered Around Gender-related Issues

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Abstract: This paper relates cringe political communication on social media to gender-based disinformation and identity politics. Our analysis employs qualitative coding (Grounded Theory) of social media content produced by representatives of the rising Czech conservative political party Motorists and its youth faction, Generation Engine. Their cringe political communication, strategically targeting young men, has three dimensions: hypermasculinity, hetero-/cishnormativity, and misogyny. It ridicules gender diversity and humiliates political opponents while emphasizing and celebrating the alleged normative masculinity of Motorists' representatives. We argue that cringe political communication, employing gender issues schematically as an anti-discourse but disguised as humor, is used to enforce societal norms and discipline the objects of cringe, including political opponents. The experience of cringing also reinforces the sense of subculture among Motorists' supporters and alienates them from society, presented as deranged, confused, and blinded by progressive ideology.

Keywords: cringe humor; Motorist for Themselves; social media; far-right political communication; gender-related misinformation

INTRODUCTION

Anti-feminist and anti-gender discourses are increasingly becoming part of European politics, with mainly right-wing parties across Europe politicizing these issues (Dergiç et al., 2022; Kováts & Póim, 2015). At the same time, concerns stemming from data revealing the rising misogyny and conservatism of young

European men (Deutsch, 2024), stimulated by the so-called manosphere in the digital space (Botto & Gottzén, 2024), are flooding the public spheres in a form resembling a moral panic. In such a political and socio-cultural climate, a conservative, right-wing political party, Motorists for Themselves (generally referred to as Motorists further in the text), promoting strong hetero-/cis-normative and patriarchal values, emerged in 2022. The party entered the Czech Parliament in autumn 2025 and formed the current government coalition. An important element of the party's success has been its ability to gain support among young males (Volební model, 2025) – to capitalize on this appeal, the party established a youth organization, Generation Engine, in November 2024.

The extensive social media presence is one of the crucial factors of Motorists' success, and the use of humor keeps their audiences on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok engaged. Jokes, memes, or short video clips are used to promote their political messaging, including conservative values. In this sense, Motorists resemble other right-wing parties utilizing humor to support their political objectives (Bauer, 2023).

The aim of this paper is to relate Motorists' cringe humorous communication to gender and identity politics, specifically to gender misinformation. We analyze gender aspects of online political communication of Motorists for Themselves and Generation Engine in the year before the 2025 Parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic. We are interested in how this very specific form of humorous content relates to the discursive construction of gender relations and sexuality as political issues in the official online communication of the party.

We theoretically approach the study from a perspective of political communication. More specifically, we are inspired by two theoretical areas. First, we follow studies thematizing the anti-gender discourse as part of the right-wing backlash against liberalism and the rise of authoritarianism in the Western liberal democratic countries (Dergić et al., 2022). We are particularly inspired by studies on anti-gender mobilizations (Dergić et al., 2022; Kováts & Pöim, 2015) and rejection of gender diversity and inclusivity as one of the “anti-discourses” (Martinsson & Ericson, 2015) employed in political communication (Barla & Bjork-James, 2021). We also borrow from studies connecting political expression to collective identity building, specifically those studying discursive intolerance towards different groups as tools of community building and political radicalization (Hogg, 2023; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2024).

Second, we are informed by theoretical and empirical scholarship studying cringe as a specific, humorous communication strategy not only in the context of specific political agendas and goals (Bauer, 2023), but also with regard to broader power relations and norms-enforcement in democratic countries (Billig, 2005). We pay particular attention to research conceptualising cringe as “a hostile social emotion” linked to disgust, rather than merely embarrassment. As such,

it enables political actors to express hostility and denial in a seemingly acceptable, non-violent manner, while simultaneously constructing certain identities (in our case, related to gender issues) as being outside the acceptable norms (Spiegel, 2025 p. 229).

POLITICAL PARTY MOTORISTS FOR THEMSELVES: HISTORY, REPRESENTATIVES, AND IDEOLOGY

The Motorists party was established in 2022 by Petr Macinka, who previously collaborated with former president Václav Klaus, known for euroscepticism, climate change denial, and criticism of "progressivism" allegedly dominating Western societies (see, for example, Klaus, 2023). These views resonate in the party's communication and programmatic documents. In 2024, their coalition with the Oath party (Přísaha) gained 10% of votes and two seats in the European Parliament (Havlík & Kluknavská, 2024).

Their representatives joined the right-wing political group, Patriots for Europe. One of them has been Filip Turek, the former racer, car enthusiast, and president of the Jaguar Club. Turek entered the Czech information space in 2022 when he started to host the show *Po žních k Turkovi* (the title references a punchline from a popular Czech comedy) on the YouTube channel V.O.X. TV. Turek has significant reach on social media – his Instagram has 260,000 followers. He is also active on his X-account with handler @DolphSegal referring to actors of 1980s action movies (49,000 followers), Facebook (87,000 followers), and TikTok (62,000 followers). His communication is supported by a profile Hranatost (Squareness), that is active on Facebook (93,000 followers), Instagram (132,000 followers) and TikTok (62,000 followers). The name of the account refers to sharp features of Turek's face which he turned into his personal trademark. Turek, for instance, uses the term "Square legend" on his promotion materials or calls his supporters by the neologism "Squares" (Hranatci). While the "Squareness" accounts claim not to be affiliated with Turek personally, journalists uncovered that it is operated by his former assistant in the European parliament (Tomeš & Prchal, 2025). Turek is a controversial figure due to his sympathies to far-right ideologies exemplified by bragging about collecting of Nazi memorabilia, making comments that could be interpreted as endorsement of Nazism, or giving a Nazi salute while driving. Turek explained such statements as "youthful stupidity" and "black humor" (Stein, 2024).

In the parliamentary elections in 2025, the party gained 6,77% and 13 seats in the Parliament and became a member of the coalition government. The key group of the party voters has been men between 18 and 29 years old. According to sociological polls, 14% of respondents from this group would vote for Motorists

(STEM, 2025). To take advantage of the fact, Motorists launched its youth organization, Generation Engine, in November 2024, led by Matěj Gregor, a student of history, local politician in the city of Ostrava, and former activist promoting leaving the EU (Trojan, 2025). Similarly to Turek, the youth organization became infamous for its “humorous” photo corner at its convention with posters referring to nazism, racism, and violence against political opponents. Gregor downplayed the seriousness of such claims with reference to exaggerated humor (iDnes, 2024).

ANTI-GENDER DISCOURSES AS A PART OF SHARED ONLINE IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The subject of our study, the right-wing political party Motorists and their youth faction Generation Engine, perceive themselves as opposition to liberalism and progressivism, which they view as destabilizing social changes that bring uncertainty and confusion. We thus theoretically frame our research by studies connecting uncertainty with identity theory and the online environment. Such scholarship stresses that online political communication provides people with a possibility to connect and identify as a group with clear characteristics and a common “worldview and sense of self” (Hogg, 2023, p. 828), reducing their uncertainty by providing them with a readily available identity confirmation and validation (Hogg, 2023, p. 832).

Martinsson and Ericson (2022) specifically point out the process of identity formation facilitated by digital technologies and their connectivity and performativity. In this process, social media are providing people easily with an opportunity to belong to a community and to be recognized as its valid members. However, alongside these generally positive aspects, they argue, the (online) shared identity is typically constructed by the simultaneous rejection of the “Other” (Martinsson & Ericson, 2022), resulting in societal fragmentation and intolerance towards other groups (Hogg, 2023; Törnberg, 2022). Törnberg and Törnberg (2024) describe the process of “discursive community formation” (p. 6) in which people are socialised into specific communities through conversational rituals forming a shared discourse “within which certain beliefs become sacred and unquestionable”. Authors add that these processes, intensified by digital media, may result in strongly negative perceptions of other groups and in “a breakdown of social cohesion” (Törnberg, 2022, p. 1), as well as in the creation of “identity silos” – groups of people who identify with intolerant beliefs because it helps them reduce their self-uncertainty and sense of marginalisation (Hogg, 2023, p. 832). Saucier et al. (2016) specifically mention the role of racial humor in group identification and in shifting norms of expression. The intentionally antisocial humor, they argue, “may reinforce the social hierarchy and

stereotypes about the individuals it targets, potentially loosening societal norms that discourage expressions of prejudice" (ibid, p. 75).

Given the focus of our study on gender aspects of cringe political communication of a right-wing party, we further build upon scholarship concerned with anti-gender discourses and misogynist and sexist agenda as inherent parts of conservative discourses. Studies consider politicization of individual (gender) identities as typical strategies of right-wing backlash against liberalism (Dergić et al., 2022) and a "symbolic glue" connecting conservative political forces across Europe (Barla & Bjork-James, 2021, p. 379; Kováts & Póim, 2015, p. 147). Anti-gender discourses and their intersection with other "anti-discourses" are thus seen as a form of self-legitimization and identity protection (ibid, p. 380), with a constant flow of anti-gender content serving as ideological mobilization and contributing to the "transformative struggle about how gender, sexuality, and multiculturalism must be understood in a national and transnational context" (Martinsson & Ericson, 2022, pp. 2– 4). With regard to the post-socialist context of our research case, Donskikh and Akopov (2024) mention gender-based humor in Russia's president Vladimir Putin's speeches as a strategy to maintain a heteronormative gendered order and associate the collective identity of the citizens and country with masculinity. From a different perspective, other scholars consider misogynist attacks as a form of not only discrediting female opponents in political debates (Vowles & Hultman, 2021; White, 2021), but also of preserving the "capitalist values and order which provide power and privilege only to those identities that the authors call 'industrial/breadwinner masculinities' or 'petro-masculinities'" (Barla & Bjork-James, 2021, p. 380), stabilising "the position of white heterosexual men" and maintaining traditional worldviews (White, 2021, p. 399).

HUMOR AND CRINGE AS COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN FAR-RIGHT POLITICS AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

In recent years, cringe comedy emerged as a popular genre symbolized by TV series like *The Office*, *The Inbetweeners*, or *Borat* movies. The essence of their humor is constructing a situation in which characters unknowingly break social norms. The audience's understanding of the inappropriateness creates a mix of shame, amusement, and discomfort, resulting in masochistic pleasure (Mayer, Paulus and Krach 2021). Some researchers argued that the experience of vicarious embarrassment can have a positive impact on generating empathy (Hye-Knudsen, 2018), pointing out societal problems such as prejudice or racism (Wöhrle, 2021) or breaches of social taboos, including gender-related issues (Havas & Sulimma, 2018). However, more skeptical voices emphasize that cringing is inevitably

linked with feelings of aversive disgust and represents a socially acceptable form of hostility (Spiegel, 2025).

We argue that the potentially negative aspects of cringe humor become more apparent when analyzing different types of content than the often-referenced TV shows, which are written and produced under constraints imposed by the logic of the entertainment industry. Borat films or female-centered cringe dramedy can serve as a tool of empowerment by disturbing the “gendered expectations of mediated femininity” through “violations of social and cultural taboos [...] and expectations about appropriate enactments of femininity” (Havas & Sulimma, 2018 pp. 83-89). However, the cringe humor applied by the far-right – represented by the Motorists’ party in our research – can be used to promote the anti-gender agenda and construct and enforce social norms that they present as natural.

The (mis)use of humor by far-right political actors is a well-established research field (e.g., Pérez, 2022). Various authors demonstrated that humor can be used by politicians to assault opponents and enforce racial, gender, and other hierarchies (Bauer, 2023; Svatoňová, 2023). The use of humor provides far-right actors with greater freedom of manoeuvre in the public debate. They can make even the most extreme views more accessible to mainstream audiences under the guise of humor. The excuse that “it is just a joke” can present their critics as humorless and provides a potential path for retreat in case their views come under public or legal scrutiny (Askanius, 2021).

Memes, jokes, and quips allow for “punch down” against vulnerable groups such as minorities, migrants, or transgender people (Pérez, 2016; Pérez, 2022; Saucier, Conor, & Strain, 2016). At the same time, rebellious humor subverting power structures allows the far-right to “punch up” (Billig, 2005) since it can position itself as a minority standing against detached “progressive” elites blinded by their own ideology (Wagner & Schwarzenegger, 2020). With regard to our research topic, it is important to note that gender-based humor is a highly resonant tool in depicting the elites as stereotypically feminine – hysterical, naïve and weak (Pettersson et al., 2023). The sharing of jokes, memes, and other types of humorous content targeting elite actors and their conventions can be a powerful way to increase cohesion and create a space of ontological security (Windisch & Simi, 2023).

Cringe humor can be an effective communication tool for the far-right since it generates strong and uncomfortable feelings, leading to disgust and hostility towards people violating alleged social norms (Spiegel, 2025). These individuals are becoming dehumanized since they are presented as irretrievably abnormal and anti-social. The feeling of vicarious embarrassment prevents their recognition as fellow citizens and delegitimizes their opinions and worldviews.

Cringing as a collective experience can also serve as a way to foster cohesion among supporters of far-right politicians and effectively draw lines between

them and the rest of society. The ability to define social norms and recognize when someone transgresses them creates a sense of social superiority that can reinforce the exclusivity of the group sharing humorous experiences (Spiegel, 2025). The connection is also formed on an emotional level since cringing represents a moment of reaffirmation of shared affective infrastructure that was temporarily disbalanced by confronting an awkward situation (Smilges, 2024). Humor can also serve as a tool of enforcement of hierarchies and disciplining of members (Bellè, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper is inspired by research on the cringe aspects of right-wing political communication, as well as by literature highlighting the rise of anti-gender mobilizations as part of the conservative backlash against liberal values. Our research connects these two spheres by examining the cringe aspects of anti-gender mobilizations in the online political communication of a right-wing political party, Motorists, and their youth faction, Generation Engine. Since the party has become relevant only recently to our knowledge, the article is one of the first scholarly attempts to map out its communication, ideology, and agenda. Furthermore, to fill in the relative gap in research on cringe aspects of anti-gender political mobilizations, our research aims to answer the following main research question:

- RQ1: How does anti-gender discourse intersect with cringe aspects of online political communication of Motorists For Themselves and Generation Engine?

To offer a more nuanced typology of anti-gender discourse, we ask the following subsequent research questions:

- RQ2: How are gender norms constructed and represented in the cringe political communication of Motorists For Themselves and Generation Engine?
- RQ3: Which individuals or groups are presented as violators of the alleged gender norms in the cringe political communication of analyzed actors?
- RQ4: What techniques are used to evoke feelings of cringe related to the supposed violators of norms in Motorists' audiences?

DATA

To fulfill our research goals, we created our sample from posts on official social media profiles of Motorists for Themselves, their two main representatives, Filip Turek (former MEP and current member of the Czech Parliament) and Petr Macinka (chair), Generation Engine (or “Motorgen”) and its leader Matěj Gregor, and Hranatost (Squareness), a profile promoting Turek. We focused on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to ensure diversity of content. We followed online communication of the above subjects published from September 2024 to September 2025, covering a year before the 2025 Parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic. However, the “Motorgen” profiles are more recent, as they follow the history of the youth movement officially established in November 2024. The final sample comprises 88 posts (usually shared on multiple social media/profiles) and only includes content that explicitly thematizes gender issues and, at the same time, can be identified as containing cringe humor.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

We conducted an explorative, inductive qualitative content analysis of social media content produced by Motorists for Themselves and Generation Engine in order to gain an in-depth insight into the complexity of the aspects of both cringe communication and anti-gender discourse produced online by the political party in question.

We employed the first two coding procedures of the Grounded Theory as it is especially suitable for exploring new topics while preventing researchers from influencing the results by their previous expectations (Charmaz, 2006). We started with open coding to identify all possible aspects of cringe communication in public posts related to gender issues, as well as specific anti-gender statements and the targets of anti-gender rhetoric. A specific code was assigned to every relevant aspect of the data. In the second step, we identified relations among the initial open codes and patterns in the data, resulting in the construction of the first level of categories, which were further grouped to identify a final set of categories, including their detailed structure (i.e. subcategories related to main categories etc.). Our analytical focus and sensitivity were framed by our interest in the cringe content ridiculing gender-based identity politics, feminism and, more generally, the agenda of liberal politicians through statements declaring the party's stance toward the gendered social order and gender relations in general. Specifically, in each post we observed a) what social norms in relation to gender issues are constructed through the content; b) who is presented as a violator of alleged social norms and c) what techniques are used to evoke feelings of cringe in the supposed target audience of Motorists' political communication.

We had to deal with one major methodological challenge – the polysemic character of cringe humor, meaning that “there can be multiple interpretations of humor” (Pérez, 2016 p. 929), especially because the definitions of “cringe” are open to further interpretation. We thus decided to focus on analyzing the possible intention of the text producer and the inscription of the preferred reading in the text (Fiske, 2010), attempting to identify the values of the communicators and the mechanisms of control over the gender discourse they employ to reduce the polysemy of their cringe humorous production. We consider the content cringe when it is obvious that the producers use it to ridicule their ideological opponents through the “use of various situations to induce vicarious embarrassment, and possibly laughter, in the audience” (Mayer et al., 2021: 9), prioritizing the conceptualizations of cringe connecting it with hostile emotions (Spiegel, 2025).

RESULTS

Our analysis follows two main directions corresponding to our research questions. First and foremost, we offer a detailed analysis of the anti-gender narratives and conceptualization of gender issues by Motorists in their online communication (RQ2). Second, we specifically focus on the description of argumentation strategies (RQ4) and targets of anti-gender discourse in Motorists’ online communication to reveal the main pillars of their construction of an ideological online community (RQ3).

The subchapters below will focus on main categories encompassing various strategies of Motorists a) revealing their broader ideological positions and normative expectations regarding gender issues (ideology, norms), b) related to specific targets of their anti-gender discourse (representations of outgroups) and c) contributing to a construction of the desired ingroup characteristic of the shared “Motorists community” (representations of ingroup) by evoking feelings of cringe. Because all these three analyzed aspects are inseparable in Motorists’ communication, we will present our findings across these areas, following the logic of the most abstract categories resulting from axial coding (these categories also represent broader “narratives” about the gendered social order presented by Motorists).

MAIN FINDINGS

Politicians of the Motorists party employ cringe humor as a dehumanizing communication tactic towards a wider group of opponents – mostly LGBTQ+ activists and identities, journalists, and political opponents. They use cringe humor in two different ways: Firstly, as a rebellious tool, by presenting “gender

ideology” (often only explicitly labelled as “gender”) as an elite project pushed by progressives controlling public discourse; and, secondly, as a disciplinary tool, by representing any identity outside the cis – and hetero-normative frame as a deviation from the expected norms of gender and sexual relations.

The disciplining aspect of cringe humor has an important internal vector, as it targets members of the movement to whom it prescribes not only the right opinions and taboo topics, but also a model of desired, expected masculinity to which they should aspire. This model is extremely personalized in Motorists’ communication – it is represented by Filip Turek and his attributes summarised as “squareness”, reflecting both his physical appearance and the desired (square, sharp) aspects of his personality and values, as in the opposition to the undesired “roundness”. We thus argue that the ambition of Motorists is not only to organize a political party, but also to create a political subculture around specific norms and values, represented also by a nickname „Squares” (“Hranatci”) used by Turek to address his followers on social media. Gender-focused cringe humor then represents one of its key organizing principles and defines the boundaries of the community.

In our case study, as the parliamentary elections of 2025 approached, gender-related themes became less prominent in the communication of Motorists and its representatives. Also, the tone of the social media posts became less humorous and presented the party as competent, serious, and ready to take part in the governing of the country. We understand this change in communication style as a tactic to appeal to moderate right-leaning voters with little interest in identity politics, symbolized by the criticism of “gender ideology”. At the same time, we are convinced that gender topics will remain relevant for maintaining support of the core group of Motorists electorate – young males in particular – and cultivating connections with right-wing politicians abroad, especially among MAGA political circles in the United States (Hagstrom, 2026).

“NON-BINARY DEGENERATION”, “MENTAL DISORDER”, AND POLITICAL “NON-BINS”: TRANSPHOBIA AND CIS-NORMATIVITY AS CENTRAL THEMES OF MOTORISTS CRINGE CONTENT

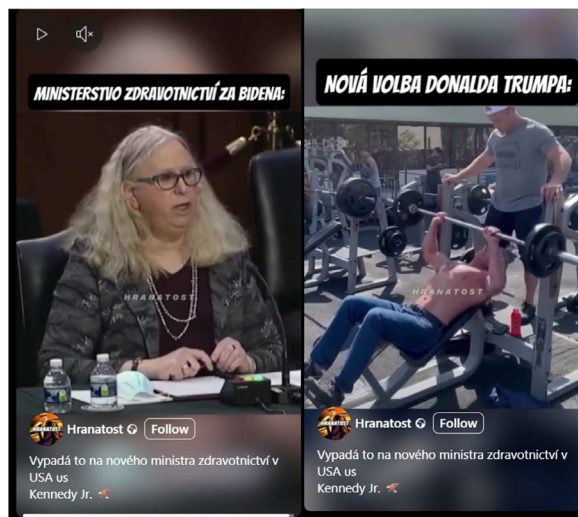
In a reply to RQ1–RQ3, we conclude that in their cringe-inducing content, Motorists express a clear message that being a cisgender, heterosexual person is a norm (*in-group norm characteristic*) and that any other identity is an aberration from that norm (*construction of cringeworthy out-group as out of the norm*). By doing so, they also construct their political party as a sensible norms guard offering an alternative to political parties consisting of “non-bins” (“nebinárky” in Czech), a term used to encompass everyone who is open to the existence of non-binary, non-cisgender/heterosexual identities. They promote the above-defined values

and norms by systematically posting content that employs hostile ridicule towards either specific members of the alleged out-group, most typically politicians and/or LGBTQ+ identities, or the idea of queerness and gender plurality as such.

Motorists associate non-binarity with their political opponents. For example, the Czech Pirate Party has been ridiculed for participation in the Prague Pride manifestation – a social media post on a Facebook profile of Macinka labelled the Pirate Party chairman as *"The leader of all Pirate non-bins"*. The Motorists' norm is then expressed clearly in the related text: *"We want a country full of self-confident, resilient, and capable people – not Pirate bums."*

Similarly, in an international context, Hranatost (Squareness), a Facebook and Instagram profile associated with Turek, expressed the Motorists' political position by juxtaposing the health minister of president Biden's administration (Rachel Levine) and the health minister in president Trump's government, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., in an edited video (Picture 1). Whereas Levine is presented as a proponent of LGBTQ+ rights, mentioning "transgender medicine" or "LGBTQ harassment", Kennedy is portrayed as a physically fit man doing strength training. Levine's video is accompanied by mocking music and laughter, whereas Kennedy is supported with strong, celebratory musical beats and exclamations such as "let's go" and supportive whistling.

Picture 1.



Source: Hranatost, a Facebook and Instagram profile associated with Filip Turek.

Translation: "Ministry of health in the Biden era." (left) "Donald Trump's new choice." (right)

Besides direct mockery of specific people with queer identities or political rivals, Motorists produce a lot of cringe content ridiculing LGBTQ+ in general and, specifically, transgender identities as such. Their rhetoric occasionally featured

disinformation about 72 genders that allegedly exist according to “progressive ideology”. A representative example of ridiculing transgender identities is a signature theme employed by the youth faction of Motorists: on their social media, they repeatedly play with a variation of their initial “joke”, the options listed under “sex” in their membership application, which include “a woman, a man, a mental disorder”. In a series of social media posts, Matěj Gregor, the leader of Generation Engine, and also the Motorists leader Macinka, ridiculed public reactions to what they interpreted as a joke. In an edited video, Gregor quotes in an altered, mocking voice selected media headlines such as: “Sex: A man, a woman, or a mental disorder? Motorists’ provocation resonates on social network sites.” He then offers a follow-up explanation of the “joke”, as well as falsely claims that anything but “a woman” and “a man” is a sexual identity disorder according to the World Health Organization. The cringe feeling is supported by Gregor’s facial expressions reacting to the collage of headlines, as well as by an awkward background noise.

Picture 2.



Source: Hranatost Instagram profile

Transgender identity as a defining theme of progressivism is a strong topic in cringe humor of Motorists who share their impression that transgender and queer identities are artificially constructed and represent totality and restriction, as their rights are promoted at the expense of other people. As an alternative, they propose traditional masculinity associated with cars and strong men driving them. In a video comparing the old and new advertisements for Jaguar cars, the Hranatost profile states: “Non-binary degenerative change of the Jaguar brand? How do you perceive it? 🤡” (Picture 2). The video reveals the alleged

(undesired) societal change by contrasting two videos, the older one in dark tones, featuring a masculine character and Jaguar in detailed shots, and the newer one in bright colors and featuring gender fluid characters.

Non-binarity is also a central theme in a subcategory that would best be described as an exaggerated intersectional hatred of progressivism. Typical for the Motorists leader, Macinka, it usually presents the complex Motorists' ideology in one sentence by concentrating all the out-groups (or anti-identities) in one cringe-like, hypertrophic, linguistically overcomplicated exclamation. A usual expression in this subcategory refuses environmentalism, non-binarity, leftism, liberalism, and the EU in one brief, lexically bizarre sentence:

"If only Comrade Klimatuše¹ Nerudová [Czech liberal MEP] had known that Filip Turek's Mercedes 600 SEL with a six-liter V12 M120 engine – under whose wheels the highway to Munich was recently surprisingly identified as German – usually meets emission limits no higher than EUR 1, so every time the accelerator is pressed, several non-bins in climate distress would be burned, she would have started a protest collection of recyclable plastic Eurobottlecaps." [Source: Petr Macinka's Facebook profile]

A specific type of intersectional hatred is represented in Generation Engine posts, which add obese people to the usual "enemies." Gregor's political communication thematizes child obesity as a significant political and educational issue and strongly promotes the ideal of physical health and an adequate, healthy weight. In his cringe content, he associates obesity with progressivism and queer identities to create another alleged characteristic of progressivism that sharply contrasts with the Motorists' normative construction of mental and physical health. In response to a follower's question about why bike lanes in Prague need to be nearly as broad as car lanes, Gregor replies in an edited video: "*Well, if you saw an average progressive at Prague Pride, they are almost as broad as cars, so I think the width of bike lanes is adequate, as it needs to correspond with progressives' width.*" A pure example of intersectionally hateful cringe content would be a curated video in which Generation Engine added a text saying "An average Motorgen [Generation Engine] hater" to a video of a person trying to dance on a makeshift balance board, dressed in a fitted leotard in bright colors. In its original context, the video (Picture 3) shows a person who is overweight and may have an intellectual disability. Generation Engine thus employs fatshaming and ableism to ridicule its ideological opponents and reproduce normative expectations regarding people's appearance and physical performance.

¹ A wordplay combining the Czech word for climate („Klima") and the name of Turek's political competitor, Danuše Nerudová.

Picture 3.



Source: MotorGen Instagram profile

“DANGEROUS GENDER PROPAGANDA” AS “A NEW RELIGION”: MOTORISTS’ ANTI-GENDER DISCOURSE THEMATIZING GENDER ISSUES AS A THREAT

Besides their dominant focus on transgender identities, non-binarity and queer identities in general, “gender” is a frequent theme in Motorists’ cringe humorous content. Critical comments targeting gender theory are of high importance, especially in content featuring Matěj Gregor. His contributions are, however, typical with oversimplification, laughter at anything but a binary, cisgender identity, and trivialization of a complex issue. He simplifies gender issues to biological sex and does not move beyond the physical binarity.

With regard to gender debate and gender-sensitive education, Gregor frequently thematizes school curricula and labels gender as a historically unprecedented “made-up ideology” because “When in history did we determine gender?”. He considers gender “a new construct” that “is not in accordance with science and biology”, and predicts that a school system that teaches about gender issues will harm future generations which will believe anything they are taught about gender – “this new religion”.

Cringe, we argue, is a convenient way for Motorists to present their dispute with the complex gender theory, as it not only allows them to simplify complicated issues, it directly requires simplification. It thus allows them to repeatedly present disinformation regarding gender theory and gender relations and to construct gender theory as the main societal threat. By using the “Triggered Feminist” meme (Picture 4) and stating that, “according to liberals”, “gender is how you feel” and “sex is how you were born”, Gregor trivializes gender identity, emphasizes the biological aspect, misinterprets gender theory, making it look

absurd and irrelevant, and, at the same time, cringes at feminists allegedly unable to see contradictions in their worldviews.

Picture 4.



Source: Matěj Gregor's Instagram profile

Picture 5.



Source: Matěj Gregor's Instagram profile

Similarly, Gregor posted a video in which his exaggerated facial expressions show how he is cringing over "the non-binary bison Fredy" from a children's cartoon

(Picture 5). A similar example is a video with randomly selected gender-focused topics discussed at universities, such as men's menstruation, or women with both a vagina and a penis, also featuring Gregor cringing at the original content. To support his argument about the irrationality of the debates about gender issues, he concluded by asking if he can identify himself as a diesel engine.

Filip Turek uses anti-gender cringe humor to thematize the European Union as a project led by gender ideology, which he ridicules when discussing thematically unrelated topics. In an edited video illustrating this strategy, the Hranatost (Squareness) profile presents Turek commenting on the alleged plan to build an EU army. Turek wildly fantasizes about rainbow electrotanks in which there will be enough space for pregnant women, and then adds: "But I say: 'And how about pregnant men?!'" (for a graphic illustration, see Picture 6 below).

Picture 6.



Source: ?Hranatost Facebook profile

“SQUARE LEGENDS”: HYPERMASCULINITY AND HETERONORMATIVITY

The crucial part of gender-related communication of Motorists is presenting their representatives (and by extension, supporters and voters) as ideals of the masculine norm. From this position, they differentiate themselves from the allegedly flawed or inauthentic masculinity of their political opponents. Cringing moments are created by contrasting the likable (hyper)masculinity of Motorists and the oddity of their opponents, allegedly deviant from heteronormative social norms.

The key component of Filip Turek's presentation on social media is his depiction as the ideal of masculinity. He is presented as charismatic, handsome, and irresistibly attractive to women. To underline this image, Turek

posted his portrayal, wishing women all the best for "Square Valentine's Day" or International Women's Day. Another element of Turek's social media persona is his calmness and reason. His statements are presented as concise and punchy in edited videos from political debates, whereas his opponents look confused or ridiculous, and their voices are altered to sound unnatural. His dominance is reinforced by using terms such as *"the legend"* or *"the king of Czech politics"*, or suggestive songs such as *Holding Out for a Hero*.

Other Motorists' accounts employ their emphasis on masculinity less explicitly in their content, with cringe aspects, mainly to differentiate themselves from political opponents whose manliness is presented as flawed or inauthentic. Such a dynamic is typical for the chairman of the party, Petr Macinka, and his content directed against the leader of the Pirate Party, Zdeněk Hřib. To contrast his masculine performance in a demanding Spartan Race, he published a video comparing himself to Hřib, represented as lazy, weak, and clumsy *"whiner"* and *"Pirate non-bin"* (see Picture 7).

Picture 7.



Source: Petr Macinka's Facebook profile

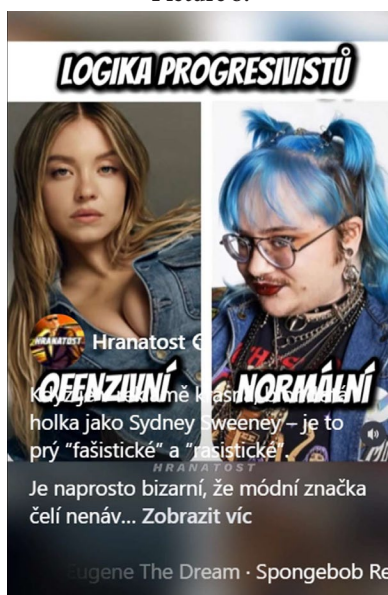
Presenting political opponents as emasculated was not limited to individual political figures in Motorists' communication. It was used to criticize various social groups and institutions. When promoting Generation Motor, Gregor highlighted that instead of being *"progressives"* or *"rainbow generation of snowflakes"*, young people are *"critically thinking"* right-wingers. Turek mocked the European Union for *"holding hard non-binary green [political] lines in one hand and soya latté in the other"* and ridiculed the back then Prime Minister Fiala's team for attempting to *"turn Prime Minister Fiala into Sigma"*: *"You can't make a racehorse*

out of a donkey. A man born as an ox doesn't become a stallion. You can't turn Petr Fiala into Filip Turek."

MISOGYNY RIDICULING LIBERAL WOMEN

Women became targets for the Motorist's cringe humor when they were perceived as transgressors of heteronormative social norms. Hence, female progressive activists represent a typical target, presented as deluded, deranged, and unattractive. In contrast, young and attractive (according to heteronormative standards) women were treated positively as symbols demonstrating Turek's position as a (hyper-)masculine idol. Also, Motorists actively contrasted in their content what they perceived as the heteronormative beauty standard (such as Sydney Sweeney in the controversial American Eagle commercial) with appearances allegedly considered attractive by "progressives". In August 2025, they posted a portrayal of a trans-coded person with blue hair, large glasses, and a mustache as a contrast to Sweeney, with Sweeney labeled sarcastically as allegedly offensive, whereas the other person was labeled as "normal" (see Picture 8).

Picture 8.



Source: Hranatost Facebook profile

In our data, we identified MEP Danuše Nerudová from the liberal party Mayors and Independents as a prominent target of hostile cringe, misogyny-based criticism. Social media accounts associated with Motorists repeatedly attacked her not only for her political agenda, but also criticized her appearance

with a misogynistic subtext or used her as an example of the undesired presence of women in politics. One video showed several moments of Nerudová smiling during a political debate with the inscription "*when you do not have any arguments, at least smile*". Another post presented her as a stereotypical "*try-hard, self-important, and unpopular classmate*". Such content not only ridiculed the rival female politician, but also, employing cringe-inducing edits, constructed her as an impersonation of a political enemy.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Our research focuses on the role of cringe humor in the social media communication of the Motorists party, its main representatives, and its youth organization, Generation Engine. While this party got established only relatively recently, it managed to find a specific spot in the Czech ideological landscape as opponents of liberalism and progressivism, represented by allegiance to the political group Patriots for Europe in the European Parliament and endorsement of U.S. President Donald Trump. Motorists also managed to appeal to a new group of voters – males between 18 and 29 years old – who became their key demographic. Hence, social media communication was crucial for mobilizing this part of the electorate.

In Motorist's communication on social media, the combination of anti-gender discourses and cringe humor appeared consistently from September 2024 until September 2025 and has been an important element of the public image of the new party and its main representatives (RQ1). While such a conclusion is in line with recent research documenting the use of humor by parties and groups on the far-right of the political spectrum, our analysis contributes specifically to a better understanding of how anti-gender cringe humor is used systematically across various social media profiles of Motorists as a symbolic glue (Kováts & Póim, 2015), mobilizing supporters around values of hyper-masculinity and cis-normativity. Motorists used cringe humor to reinforce conservative gender hierarchies and present themselves as their most capable and manly defenders (RQ2). While doing so, they positioned themselves against their alleged violators – caricatured liberals, presented as a group of fanatic activists of the quasi-religious ideology of progressivism trying to impose their values on the whole society. More specifically, we identified the ridicule and refusal of transgender people's rights as a central theme in Motorists' cringe communication, dehumanizing them as a "mental disorder" and the latest craze of progressive ideology (RQ3). We demonstrate the disciplining role of humor (Bellè, 2025; Billig, 2005) specifically on the analysis of anti-gender cringe content and show how, through feelings of vicarious embarrassment about expressions of transgender identity,

it acts as a disciplining strategy, making it difficult for receivers to engage in a meaningful deliberation about the topic or empathise with members of the ridiculed community. In a similar manner, cringe humor in social media posts of Motorists provides a caricatured presentation of women not conforming to heteronormative beauty standards.

Motorist's communication employed multiple approaches to creating cringe inducing content including mocking nicknames, memes or edited clips. A recurring feature of their communication has been the discursive construction of a dichotomy between individuals, groups, or entities represented as transgressing purportedly natural gender hierarchies and Motorists and their supporters, who are positioned as possessing the capacity to identify such transgressions (RQ4). Vague portrayal of the allegedly omnipresent progressive enemy allowed them to attribute progressive values to any critic – political opponents, NGOs, journalists, or activists – and turn them into targets of cringe humor. At the same time, caricaturing of opponents facilitates self-representation of Motorists as (hyper-) masculine archetypes – calm, dominating, rational, and witty. We hypothesize that the experience of cringing reinforces the sense of subculture among supporters of Motorists (nicknamed “Squares” by Turek) and alienates them from the rest of society, presented as cringeworthy, deranged, and blinded by progressive ideology. We thus extend previous research documenting how conversational rituals online socialize discussants into specific discursive communities (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2024) and suggest that the combination of anti-gender, a strong anti-discourse (Martinsson & Ericson, 2022), and cringe humor specifically supports an online collective identity formation built upon intolerance towards other groups (Hogg, 2023; Törnberg, 2022). We argue that, beyond the above stated, the powerful combination of anti-gender discourse and cringe humor shifts norms of expression about gender issues (Saucier et al., 2016) and normalizes their ridicule or even hostility towards them in the public sphere (Spiegel, 2025), while, at the same time, relieving Motorists from liability for what they present as mere innocent joking (Askanius, 2021). Moreover, when the targets of their ridicule (rival politicians, liberals/progressives) react publicly to their cringe content, a broader, culture-war-like debate floods the digital space, which has the potential to overshadow socially and politically more important issues and controversies.

To add a broader context to our study, we need to consider the discrepancy between the prominent role of cringe humor related to gender in the social media communication of Motorists and a strikingly low representation of the topic in the fairly exhaustive party manifesto for parliamentary elections 2025. This document only claims that children at elementary schools should be protected from “*activities of progressive non-profit organizations that try to explain to them that it is normal to be ‘trans’ or that there are genders other than a man and*

a woman" (Manifesto, 2025). Similarly, gender-related topics almost disappeared from Motorists' communication before the elections, and the party abandoned its humorous tone and tried to depict itself as competent and serious. Since the party entered Parliament and now constitutes the current Czech government, it remains to be seen how prominent gender-related topics will be in its future communication and overall political agenda.

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